1999 budget: ad hoc procedures

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In preparation of the budgetary conciliation procedure planned the Committeeadopted the report by Bárbara DÜHRKOP DÜHRKOP (PES, E) on ad hoc procedures for the 1999 budget during its meeting of 25th June. These procedures cover three areas: agriculture, fisheries agreements and the common foreign and security policy (CFSP). As regards the ad hoc procedure on agricultural expenditure, the committee said that for 1999 it would be a good idea to repeat what was done last year, i.e. to have an amending letter from the Commission at the end of October so that the amount of appropriations entered in the budget was as close as possible to real needs; this would reduce the risk of overestimates. It called for the creation of a special reserve for market uncertainties and accompanying measures. Pending the amending letter, the committee wishes to place Ecu 700m, which would be found by making a provisionally linear reduction in all B1 (EAGGF-Guarantee Section) lines. The Commission is asked to submit, before Parliament's 1st reading, an evaluation report on the expenditure made following the 1992 CAP reform on early retirement, reafforestation and agri-environmental measures. On the subject of the legal bases, for certain appropriations in the preliminary draft budget for which the legal basis has yet to be decided by Council, the committee calls on the Council not to enter appropriations under these lines until it has taken a legislative decision. Pending such a decision, these appropriations should be entered under a special heading, without increasing the overall amount for B1 (EAGGF-Guarantee Section). As regards the funding of international fisheries agreements, the committee says that the same procedure of using an amending letter together with an update on the negotiations under way will enable a decision to be taken on the amounts to be entered in the reserve. The Commission will provide this information by the end of September. With regard to the ad hoc procedure for the funding of the CFSP, the committee advocates an increase in the appropriations for conflict prevention and those for EU special envoys. It also suggests reducing the amount for emergency measures (European Civil Peace Corps). The ad hoc procedures were conceived as a framework for dialogue and a means of bringing closer together the positions of Parliament and Council (the two arms of the budgetary authority), as early as the stage of the preliminary draft budget presented by the Commission. The main aim is to overcome in a pragmatic way the longstanding differences between the two institutions over the classification of budget expenditure as either "compulsory" or "non-compulsory" expenditure. This pragmatic cooperation, which does not call into question the prerogatives of each institution as regards the type of expenditure (the Council keeping its decisive role on compulsory expenditure and Parliament having the final say on non-compulsory expenditure), has been built up gradually. It has been encouraged by the case-law of the Court of Justice, which has on a number of occasions called on the Council and Parliament to reach agreement. The ad hoc conciliation procedures are based on Interinstitutional Agreements or joint declarations. The procedure on agriculture expenditure is provided for in the Agreement of 29.10.93 on budgetary discipline and the procedure on funding the CFSP in the Agreement of 16.7.97. The joint declaration of 12.12.96 is the basis for the procedure on international fisheries agreements.